
April 1, 2020

The Honorable David L. Bernhardt
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Pete T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Bernhardt, Secretary Perdue, and Administrator Gaynor:

Western Governors write to request your help in mobilizing the agencies under your control to offer coordinated support for rural counties and municipalities as they respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Rural communities in our states are working to establish local emergency operation centers to help manage their response to the COVID-19 outbreak, but face challenges with limited staff capacity.

One of the most significant resources you have is the thousands of federal civil servants with relevant experience to assist with emergency response. The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have thousands of staff across the country who are Incident Command System qualified and have experience rapidly responding to forest fires, mobilizing critical resources, and managing information flow in times of crisis. Likewise, Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel are fully qualified to support local communities with organizational and logistical needs during an emergency.

Collectively, your personnel are an enormous asset that could be of invaluable assistance to local communities in this time of great need. Western Governors urge you to consider how these resources could be effectively deployed to help rural counties and municipalities to enhance staff capacity, provide their emergency response expertise, and support communities facing this public health crisis.

We encourage you to support efforts to deploy your resources to assist rural communities and identify and address any regulatory impediments that could hinder their cooperation with local government officials. If there are statutory barriers preventing federal engagement with state and local governments, we would appreciate being informed of such restrictions and would be interested in discussing potential remedies with our congressional delegations.

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Western Governors appreciate your leadership and service during these difficult times. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Doug Burgum
Governor of North Dakota
Chair, Western Governors' Association



Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
Vice Chair, Western Governors' Association